

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims are 1-4, 7, 10-17 and 20-23. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 9 and to delete the alternative that one welding torch comprises a laser unit which has been made the subject matter of new claim 23 dependent on claim 1. Accordingly, claim 9 has been canceled, and claims 2-4 have been amended and claim 8 has been canceled in view of the amendment to claim 1. In addition, claim 14 has been amended to specify that only one current source supplies energy for conducting the first and second welding processes and to delete the alternative that the second welding process comprises a laser welding process, and claims 15-17 have been amended in view of the amendment to claim 14. Claims 1-4, 7, 10-17 and 20-22 have also been amended to improve their form. Support for the claims may be found, *inter alia*, in the original claims. Reconsideration is expressly requested.

Claims 1, 4, 7-14, 17 and 20-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Ditschun et al.* U.S. Patent No. 4,806,735 in view of *Forrest et al.* U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0148113 and *Trube et al.* U.S. Patent No. 6,469,277. The remaining claims were 2-3 and 15-16

were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Ditschun et al.*, *Forrest et al.* and *Trube et al.*, and further in view of *Brunner et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,570,132.*

In response, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 14 to better define the invention and respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection for the following reasons.

As set forth in claim 1 as amended, Applicant's invention provides a welding unit wherein at least two welding torches are configured to carry out a cold metal transfer welding process and only one current source is arranged in the welding apparatus to supply the welding torch unit with energy, which current source is alternately connected with one of the first and second welding torches. As set forth in claim 14 as amended, Applicant's invention provides a welding method wherein first and second cold metal transfer welding processes are carried out and only one current source supplies energy for conducting the first and second welding processes.

None of the cited references discloses or suggests a welding unit having the structure set forth in Applicant's claim 1 as amended or a welding method having the steps set forth in

Applicant's claim 14 as amended wherein only one current source supplies energy for conducting the first and second welding processes. Although the Examiner has taken the position that the primary reference to *Ditschun et al.* shows in FIG. 1 a common current source 24 arranged in the welding apparatus to supply the welding torch unit with energy whereby the current source is alternately connected with one of the first and second welding torches, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's position is unfounded. *Ditschun et al.* describes a high current pulse which is alternately switched between the two electrodes 10, 12 but simultaneously also a low level current generated from a second current source is fed to the electrodes. Therefore, the construction according to *Ditschun et al.* has two current sources and not only one common current source as recited in Applicant's claims 1 and 14 as amended.

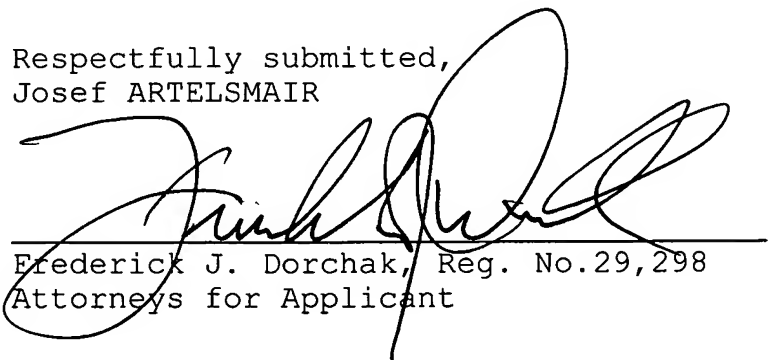
The remaining references to *Forrest et al.*, *Trube et al.*, and *Brunner et al.* have been considered but are believed to be no more relevant. None of these references discloses or suggests a welding unit or a welding method wherein only one current source supplies energy for conducting first and second cold metal transfer welding processes.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 14 as amended, together with claims 2-4, 7, 10-13 and 23 and claims 15-17 and 20-22 which depend directly or indirectly on claims 1 and 14 as amended, respectively, are patentable over the cited references.

In summary, claims 1-4, 7, 10-17 and 20-22 have been amended, claims 8-9 have been canceled, and new claim 23 has been added. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed and that this application be passed to issue.

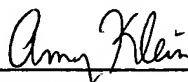
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